



Land at Ball Green Farm, Staffordshire
Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA)

PINS Ref: APP/B3438/W/24/3351328

Application Ref: SMD/2022/0076

Document Control Sheet

Project Name: Land at Ball Green Farm, Staffordshire

Project Ref: 333101234

Report Title: Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment

Doc Ref: 333101234/A5/LVIA

Date: October 2024

	Name	Position	Signature	Date
Prepared by:	Aarti Chamba	Landscape Architect	A. Chamba	01/10/2023
Reviewed by:	Matt Filer	Associate Director	M. Filer	04/10/2023
Approved by:	David Webster	Associate Director	D. Webster	31/10/2024
For and on behalf of Stantec UK Limited				

Revision	Date	Description	Prepared	Reviewed	Approved
00	06/10/2023	Submitted with planning application	AC	MF	GM
01	31/10/2024	Updated as evidence for Hearing	DW	DW	DW

Project Ref: 3331001234 | Rev: 01 | Date: October 2024

Registered Office: Buckingham Court Kingsmead Business Park, London Road, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire, HP11 1JU
Office Address: 7 Soho Square, London, W1D 3QB
T: 020 7446 6888 E: London.uk@stantec.com

Contents

1	Introduction.....	1
1.1	Overview.....	1
2	Landscape Planning Policy	3
2.1	Overview.....	3
2.2	National Policy.....	3
2.3	Local Policy	7
2.4	Additional Planning Guidance	10
3	Site Context.....	11
3.1	Location, Land Use & Transport Routes	11
3.2	Topography & Hydrology.....	11
3.3	Vegetation	11
3.4	Public Rights of Way (PRoW)	11
3.5	Designations.....	12
4	Landscape Character	13
4.1	Overview.....	13
4.2	National Character Areas	13
4.3	Local Landscape Character	15
4.4	Published Landscape Character Receptors.....	17
5	Site Appraisal.....	20
5.1	Overview.....	20
5.2	Landscape Receptors	20
6	Visual Appraisal.....	23
6.1	Overview.....	23
6.2	Close Range Views	23
6.3	Middle Range Views.....	23
6.4	Long Range Views	24
6.5	Visual Receptors	24
7	Development Proposals.....	27
7.1	Overview.....	27
7.2	Landscape Strategy.....	28
8	Green Belt	30
8.1	Overview.....	30
8.2	Contribution of the Site to the Green Belt	32
9	Assessment of Effects	34
9.1	Overview.....	34
9.2	Effects on Landscape Features.....	34
9.3	Effects on Visual Amenity.....	37
10	Summary	44

This page is intentionally blank

1 Introduction

1.1 Overview

- 1.1.1 Stantec was commissioned by Anesco Limited in November 2021 to undertake a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) to accompany full planning application for an Energy Storage System ('the Proposed Development') on Land at Ball Green Farm, Bemersley Road, Brown Edge ('the Site').
- 1.1.2 The application was validated on 4th March 2022 and was considered at Planning Committee on 29th February 2024 where the application was refused.
- 1.1.3 In preparing for this Hearing, the Appellant has considered the potential for minor changes to the Proposed Development and battery types to include the latest battery technology and specifications and proposes to submit revised plans in due course. These changes are outlined at **Section 7** of this report.
- 1.1.4 The objectives of this assessment are to:
- Assess the landscape characteristics and quality of the Site and its surrounding and function within the landscape;
 - Assess the visibility of the Site and the nature and quality of the existing views from the surrounding area;
 - Identify opportunities and constraints to development on the Site, from a landscape and visual perspective; and
 - Assess the likely landscape and visual effects resulting from the Proposed Development during operation.
- 1.1.5 The LVIA process has been used to inform the design of mitigation included with the Proposed Development with the aim of avoiding or reducing adverse landscape and visual effects. The principal elements of the LVIA are an analysis of the physical context of the Site, summary of key planning policy and evidence base relevant to the Proposed Development, appraisal of the landscape features and character of the Site and its surroundings and consideration of the landscape and visual qualities of the Site and the wider landscape, followed by an assessment of the effects on landscape character and visual amenity likely to result from the Proposed Development.
- 1.1.6 The study area for this assessment broadly equates to the extents of the landscape shown on **Figure 1: Site Context Plan**. The study area has been informed by the baseline appraisal and field surveys.

1.1.7 The methodology used for the LVIA is drawn from principles of good practice in Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 3rd Edition (Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, 2013) and is set out in **Appendix 1: LVIA & GB Methodology**.

1.1.8 This LVIA should also be read in conjunction with the following:

- **Appendix B:** LVIA Figures (1 – 7)
- **Appendix C:** LVIA Photographs (SAP & SCP)
- **Appendix D:** LVIA Photomontages (by Realm)
- **Appendix E:** LVIA Updated Photomontages (Year 15)

2 Landscape Planning Policy

2.1 Overview

2.1.1 The policies relevant to the Site and the Proposed Development are summarised below:

2.2 National Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (2023)¹

2.2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) outlines that *“the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development”*, which is defined as *“meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”*.

2.2.2 The NPPF also clarifies that planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The NPPF is a material consideration in planning decisions.

2.2.3 The NPPF states that the planning system has three overarching objectives: economic, social and environmental. The environmental objective is described as follows:

“to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.”

2.2.4 **Paragraph 9** of the NPPF also notes that the objectives should be delivered through the planning process but recognises that planning policies and decisions should *“take local circumstances into account, to reflect the character, needs and opportunities of each area”*.

2.2.5 **Paragraph 38** relates to decision making and states:

“Local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way. They should use the full range of planning tools available, including brownfield registers and permission in principle, and work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. Decision-makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.”

¹ [National Planning Policy Framework - Guidance - GOV.UK](#)

2.2.6 **Section 11** is concerned with making effective use of land, with **Paragraph 123** stating:

"Planning policies and decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions..."

2.2.7 **Paragraph 124** states that planning policies and decisions should:

a) *"encourage multiple benefits from both urban and rural land, including through mixed use schemes and taking opportunities to achieve net environmental gains – such as developments that would enable new habitat creation or improve public access to the countryside;*

b) *recognise that some undeveloped land can perform many functions, such as for wildlife, recreation, flood risk mitigation, cooling/shading, carbon storage or food production..."*

2.2.8 **Chapter 13** is dedicated to issues of protecting the Green Belt, with **Paragraph 142** stating *"...the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open..."* and that *"...the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence"*.

2.2.9 **Paragraph 143** subsequently sets out the following five purposes of the Green Belt:

a) *"To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;*

b) *To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;*

c) *To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;*

d) *To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and*

e) *To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land."*

2.2.10 **Paragraphs 152 - 156** relate to proposals that may affect the Green Belt, with **Paragraph 152** setting out that *"inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances"*.

2.2.11 **Paragraph 148** states that when considering any planning application, *"local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. 'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations"*.

2.2.12 **Paragraph 154** goes on to state that local planning authorities *“should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt”,* albeit setting out a series of exceptions, including the *“limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land...which would...not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development...”*.

2.2.13 **Paragraph 156** sets out the criteria for renewable energy development in the Green Belt:

“When located in the Green Belt, elements of many renewable energy projects will comprise inappropriate development. In such cases developers will need to demonstrate very special circumstances if projects are to proceed. Such very special circumstances may include the wider environmental benefits associated with increased production of energy from renewable sources.”

2.2.14 **Chapter 14** deals with meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change, and at **Paragraph 160** it states:

“To help increase the use and supply of renewable and low carbon energy and heat, plans should:

- a) provide a positive strategy for energy from these sources, that maximises the potential for suitable development, and their future re-powering and life extension, while ensuring that adverse impacts are addressed appropriately (including cumulative landscape and visual impacts);*
- b) consider identifying suitable areas for renewable and low carbon energy sources, and supporting infrastructure, where this would help secure their development; and*
- c) identify opportunities for development to draw its energy supply from decentralised, renewable or low carbon energy supply systems and for co- locating potential heat customers and suppliers.”*

2.2.15 **Paragraph 163** goes on to state:

“When determining planning applications for renewable and low carbon development, local planning authorities should:

- a) not require applicants to demonstrate the overall need for renewable or low carbon energy, and recognise that even small-scale projects provide a valuable contribution to significant cutting greenhouse gas emissions;*
- b) approve the application if its impacts are (or can be made) acceptable. Once suitable areas for renewable and low carbon energy have been identified in plans, local planning authorities should expect subsequent applications for commercial scale projects outside*

these areas to demonstrate that the proposed location meets the criteria used in identifying suitable areas...

2.2.16 **Section 15** relates to the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment, with Paragraph 180 setting out that planning policies and decisions should look to achieve the above by *“protecting and enhancing valued landscapes”* and *“recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services”*.

2.2.17 **Paragraph 182** notes exceptional circumstances required for development in the designated areas below:

“Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues.”

2.2.18 **Section 16** relates to conservation and enhancement of the historic environment, with a requirement for new development to take into the account the importance of historic features. **Paragraph 203** states:

“In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;*
- b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and*
- c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.”*

Planning Practice Guidance²

2.2.19 To support the policies of the NPPF, the Government has produced Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) covering a number of topics.

2.2.20 Under the sub-heading of the **Green Belt** and when considering the openness of the Green Belt (Paragraph 001), the PPG identifies the following matters, including but not limited to:

- *“openness is capable of having both spatial and visual aspects – in other words, the visual impact of the proposal may be relevant, as could its volume;*

² [Planning practice guidance - GOV.UK](#)

- *the duration of the development, and its remediability – taking into account any provisions to return land to its original state or to an equivalent (or improved) state of openness; and*
- *the degree of activity likely to be generated, such as traffic generation.”*

2.2.21 Under the sub-heading of the **Natural environment** and sub-heading of **Landscape** (Paragraph 037), the PPG supports the use of Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment to *“demonstrate the likely effects of a proposed development on the landscape”*. The PPG also makes reference to Natural England’s guidance on undertaking landscape character assessment *“to complement Natural England’s National Character Area Profiles”*.

2.2.22 Under the topic of **Renewable and low carbon energy** and sub-heading of **Planning for Renewable and low carbon energy: introduction** (Paragraph 001) the PPG states:

“Increasing the amount of energy from renewable and low carbon technologies will help to make sure the UK has a secure energy supply, reduce greenhouse gas emissions to slow down climate change and stimulate investment in new jobs and businesses. Planning has an important role in the delivery of new renewable and low carbon energy infrastructure in locations where the local environmental impact is acceptable.”

2.3 Local Policy

Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan 2014 – 2033³

2.3.1 The Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan was adopted on 9th September 2020 and sets out the council's vision and strategy for the district until 2033. It also looks at the proposed locations for development, and policies which will be used in determining planning applications. This Local Plan is the review of the Core Strategy and its policies and supersedes the Core Strategy.

2.3.2 The Local Plan mentions specific 'Spatial Aims' (SA) and 'Spatial Objectives' (SO), and the following are considered relevant to the Proposed Development:

- *“... SA2. Meeting the needs of our communities...”*
- *SA4. Maintaining a quality environment and special places...*
- *SO1. To make provision for the overall land-use requirements for the District, consistent with national policy and evidence.*
- *SO2. To create a District where development minimises its impact on the environment, helps to mitigate and adapt to the adverse effects of climate change and makes efficient use of resources...*

³ [The Adopted Local Plan 2014 - 2033 - Staffordshire Moorlands District Council](#)

- *SO8. To promote local distinctiveness by means of good design and the conservation, protection and enhancement of historic, environmental and cultural assets throughout the District.*
- *SO9. To conserve and improve the character and distinctiveness of the countryside and its landscape, heritage, biodiversity and geological resources.*
- *SO10. To deliver sustainable, inclusive, healthy and safe communities..."*

2.3.3 The policies that are considered relevant to the Site and the Proposed Development are set out below:

2.3.4 **Policy SS 1** - Development Principles, states:

"the Council will expect the development and use of land to contribute positively to the social, economic and environmental improvement of the Staffordshire Moorlands in terms of delivering, in partnership with other agencies and services:

- *support development which secures high quality, sustainable environments, efficient and effective use of resources and contributes effectively to tackling climate change and reduced carbon emissions."*

2.3.5 **Policy SD 1** - Sustainable Use of Resources, states:

"The Council will require all development to make sustainable use of resources and adapt to climate change. This will be achieved by:

- *Supporting development that is located and designed to minimise energy needs and to take advantage of maximised orientation (subject to design and landscape policies) to achieve energy savings in line with Policy SD 3."*

2.3.6 **Policy SD 2** – Renewable / Low-Carbon Energy, states:

"The Council will strive to meet part of the District's future energy demand through renewable or low-carbon energy sources (which could be through a variety of technologies, for example solar energy, biomass etc), in line with current evidence which identifies the feasibility of these forms of energy across the District. ... For all other forms of renewable energy, the Council will support small- and large- scale standalone renewable or low-carbon energy schemes subject to the following considerations:

- *the degree to which the scale and nature of a proposal impacts on the landscape, particularly having regard to relevant Landscape Character evidence and impact on the Peak District National Park (taking into account both individual and cumulative effects of similar proposals);*

- *the degree to which the developer has demonstrated any environmental/economic/social benefits of a scheme, as well as how any environmental or social impacts have been minimised (e.g., visual, noise or smell);*
- *the degree to which individual proposals reflect current local evidence regarding the feasibility of different types of renewable or low-carbon energy at different locations across the District”.*

2.3.7 Policy DC 2 - The Historic Environment:

“The Council will conserve and where possible enhance heritage assets, including their setting in a manner appropriate to their significance. This will take into account the desirability of maintaining and enhancing their significance and will ensure that development proposals contribute positively to the character of the built and historic environment...”

2.3.8 Policy DC 3 – Landscape and Settlement Setting, states:

“The Council will protect and, where possible, enhance local landscape and the setting of settlements in the Staffordshire Moorlands by:

- *Resisting development which would lead to prominent intrusion into the countryside or have a significant adverse impact on the character or the setting of a settlement or important views into and out of the settlement as identified in the Landscape and Settlement Character evidence;*
- *Supporting development which respects and enhances local landscape character, and which reinforces and enhances the setting of the settlement as identified in the Landscape and Settlement Character evidence.”*

2.3.9 Policy NE 2 – Trees, Woodlands and Hedgerows, states:

“The Council will protect existing trees, woodlands and hedgerows, in particular, ancient woodland, veteran trees and ancient or species-rich hedgerows from loss or deterioration. This will be achieved by:

- *Requiring that existing woodlands, healthy trees and hedgerows are retained and integrated within a proposed development unless the need for, and benefits of, the development clearly outweigh their loss;*
- *Requiring new developments to provide tree cover that secures a good level of sustainability through tree retention, planting and soft landscaping, including where possible the onsite replacement of any trees that are removed with sufficient tree planting to replace or increase the canopy cover on-site as appropriate. Landscaping schemes will also be required to mitigate against negative landscape impact and complement the design of new development and make provision for future maintenance. Where it is not*

possible to secure this new or replacement tree planting within the site, the Council will work with applicants to ascertain if a suitable site(s) can be found off-site for replacement planting in the locality;

- *Resisting development that would directly or indirectly damage existing ancient woodland, veteran trees and ancient or species-rich hedgerows.*

The Council will refer to its adopted Tree Strategy in the consideration of proposals; and will in general seek to retain as many trees and as much hedgerow on site as possible."

2.4 Additional Planning Guidance

Staffordshire Moorlands District Council Green Belt Review Study 2015⁴

- 2.4.1 The Green Belt review study has been produced as part of the Local Plan evidence base providing a review of the Green Belt across the District. The study was undertaken by Amec Foster Wheeler in November 2015, with additional sites assessed in September 2016 and April 2017.
- 2.4.2 As per Figure ES1 - Overall Contribution to Green Belt Purposes in the report, the Site lies within the southern part of the larger **Parcel N19** which denotes that the *"parcel makes a contribution to Green Belt purposes indicating that the purposes are partially being fulfilled and that the boundary could be revised in light of other planning factors"*.
- 2.4.3 Parcel N19 is noted as making a **Significant Contribution** to the purposes of 'Checking unrestricted sprawl' and 'Safeguarding from encroachment', but a **Limited Contribution** to the purposes of 'Preventing towns merging' and 'Setting of towns'.

⁴ [Microsoft Word - Staffordshire Moorlands Green Belt Review 2015](#)

3 Site Context

3.1 Location, Land Use & Transport Routes

3.1.1 In broad terms, the 1.85ha Site is located approximately 170m north east of Ball Green, a suburb of Chell near Burslem, Stoke-on-Trent. To the east lies Brown Edge, a village and civil parish in the Staffordshire Moorlands, approximately 1.03km from the Site boundary. The Site, its immediate setting, local and wider area to the north and east are within Staffordshire Moorlands unitary authority area, with the area to the immediate west and local and wider area to south within Stoke-on-Trent unitary authority area. Both are part of Staffordshire. At a more local level, as demonstrated by **Figure 1: Site Context Plan**, the Site is within a shallow valley landscape that is influenced by its proximity to the existing settlement edge and overhead high voltage pylons.

3.2 Topography & Hydrology

3.2.1 At a regional scale, the Site overlies the western slopes of a shallow valley that runs on a north / south axis. There are two watercourses that flow through the valley: the Head of the Trent runs along the valley floor, with a canal feeder running along the same axis located on the lower eastern valley slope, this provides water to the Caldon Canal that runs within the wider landscape to the south. **Figure 2: Topography Plan** illustrates the landform of the study area and shows that the Site is situated below the localised ridgeline, extending east on falling landform with the main part of the Site located between approximately 175 and 150m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD).

3.3 Vegetation

3.3.1 The Site is pastoral land, which at the time of the Site visit was rough grassland, with the field boundaries defined by a combination of post and wire fencing and fragmented native hedgerow with mature hedgerow trees.

3.4 Public Rights of Way (PRoW)

3.4.1 There is no public access to the Site, with a limited network of PRoW within the immediate setting and local area. As the landform rises to the east, the network of routes becomes more extensive around Brown Edge - as shown on **Figure 1**, the routes considered relevant to this assessment include the following:

- PRoW Brown Edge Footpath (FP) 13 - forming part of both the Staffordshire Moorlands Walks Long Distance Route (LDR) and the local promoted Brown Edge Green Vale Walk – the footpath heads north from Woodhouse Lane, passing through a number of arable

fields on lower lying landform, the route crosses Tongue Lane to the north where it becomes PRoW and continues north into the wider landscape;

- PRoW Brown Edge FP 6 / Staffordshire Moorlands Walks LDR – the route heads south from Woodhouse Lane along field boundaries, later becoming footpath 27;
- PRoW FP 28, heads north from Endon Road, along the edge of existing residential development off Trentside Road, after which it heads north through a low lying arable field connecting to PRoW FP 28;
- PRoW Brown Edge 8 heads south west, from Woodhouse along a track before heading through a large agricultural field and joining PRoW Brown Edge 6 further to the south west;
- PRoW Brown Edge 15, heads south west from Sytch Road / Brown Edge village edge, passing through a number of agricultural fields on falling landform, the route becomes PRoW FP20 near the development north of Endon Road, the route ends at Endon Road;
- PRoW Brown Edge 62 runs along The Rocks a narrow track that runs along a local ridgeline;
- PRoW Brown Edge 38 heads west on falling landform from Boardmans Bank, at the edge of Brown Edge. From here it runs along a farm access track before heading through a number of pastoral fields, ending at Tongue Lane, where it meets PRoW 13; and
- PRoW Brown Edge 32 starts at Hill Top and passes over a localised high point known as Marshes Hill - from which there is a defined viewing platform.

3.4.2 PRoW Brown Edge 13, 32, 62 and 6 form part of the wider circular route that is promoted as Brown Edge Green Vale Walk.

3.5 Designations

3.5.1 As demonstrated by **Figure 1**, the Site and its immediate vicinity are subject to the following designations:

- The Site is washed over by the Stoke Green Belt but is otherwise not subject to designations or particular planning policy restrictions; and
- There are no designated heritage assets within close proximity of the Site; however, there are a number of listed buildings within Brown Edge, which include Church of St Anne (Grade II); Coach House north of Church of St Anne (Grade II); and Boardmans Bank Farmhouse (Grade II) - these are all located around the junction of St Annes Lane and Old Lane, approximately 1.31km north east of the Site.

4 Landscape Character

4.1 Overview

- 4.1.1 Landscape character is the combination of physical, perceptual, cultural and historic features of a particular area which together create the unique and distinctive experiential qualities of a given landscape.
- 4.1.2 Landscape Character Assessment is a descriptive approach that seeks to identify and define the distinct character of landscapes that make up the country. This approach recognises the intrinsic value of all landscapes, not just 'special' landscapes, as contributing factors in people's quality of life, in accordance with the European Landscape Convention. It also ensures that account is taken of the different roles and character of different areas, in accordance with the NPPF Core Principles.
- 4.1.3 This section of the LVIA describes the characteristics and landscape management guidelines of Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) identified in Landscape Character Assessments at national, regional and local level that are relevant to the Site and the study area. Only those LCAs considered to have the potential to experience appreciable effects as a result of the Proposed Development are included in this assessment.
- 4.1.4 The description and key characteristics of each LCA are used as a basis for evaluation in order to inform proposed mitigation of landscape and visual effects and to make judgements on the significance of those effects. The extent of published LCAs in the vicinity of the Site are illustrated on Figure 3: Landscape Character Plan, with relevant information summarised below.

4.2 National Character Areas

NCA Profile: 64 Potteries and Churnet Valley (NE509) 2013⁵

- 4.2.1 As part of Natural England's responsibilities in delivering the Natural Environment White Paper, Biodiversity 2020 and the European Landscape Convention, Natural England has developed a series of National Character Area (NCA) profiles. These NCA profiles include an outline of the key characteristics that define broad landscape character areas. The Site is located within **NCA 64 - Potteries and Churnet Valley**, which sets out four Statements of Environmental Opportunity (SEO) as well as identifying the key characteristics of the area. SEO 1 and SEO 2 mentions to manage, expand, link, and buffer the characteristic semi-natural woodland and protect the ancient woodland; and protect and manage the rivers,

⁵ [NCA Profile: 64 Potteries and Churnet Valley - NE509](#)

streams, and springs to enhance the riverine character of the many valleys respectively. SEO 3 focuses on managing and expanding areas of characteristic unimproved grassland pastures, with SEO 4 highlighting to protect and manage historic landscape character and associated heritage assets.

4.2.2 The key characteristics of the NCA 64 are set out below:

- *“Dissected hills and small plateaux, cut by river valleys and steep ravines, contrast with the industrial and densely settled conurbation of the Potteries.*
- *Sandstones from the Millstone Grit Group and Coal Measures produce prominent, roughly north–south ridges. Softer mudstones with poorly drained and seasonally waterlogged soils and peaty soils form the intervening moorland plateaux, and mudstones and siltstones from the Triassic Mercia Mudstone Group underlie the generally lower-lying ground on the margins of the Needwood Basin.*
- *The well-wooded character throughout the Churnet Valley contrasts strongly with the urban, sparsely wooded landscapes of the Potteries. Many of the woodlands in the south consist of conifer plantations managed for commercial forestry.*
- *Deep, fast-flowing rivers Churnet, Trent, Dove and their tributaries drain the area. Riffles, scour ponds, subsidence pools and numerous small ponds provide ecological connectivity.*
- *Hedgerow banks with hedgerow oaks confine small pastures in the Churnet Valley; in the north, hedgerows are gappy and hedgerow trees are few. At higher elevations, drystone walls replace hedgerows and fields are larger and rectilinear.*
- *Agriculture is predominantly permanent pasture for grazing and stock rearing with some dairying; flatter areas are used for silage production and some arable cropping in the south, mainly cereals.*
- *Ancient semi-natural woodland occurs predominantly in the valleys with grasslands and grazing marsh within valley bottoms, especially the lower reaches of the Churnet and in the Dove Valley; there is heathland on higher ground and significant areas of open mosaic habitat on restored industrial land within urban areas.*
- *Historic heathland habitats remain with their smallholdings – rare surviving examples of rural–industrial landscapes.*
- *Historic parklands are characterised by woodland belts enclosing grassland with parkland trees and avenues with vistas. Some ancient wood pastures and squatter enclosures occur – once a common feature of the landscape, they provided shelter, pasture and fodder for livestock.*

- *There is a contrast between the settlement pattern of valley-bottom villages with scattered farmsteads and hamlets on the valley slopes in the east and the sprawling conurbation of the Potteries in the west.*
- *Major transport infrastructure includes several A roads (A34, A50 and A52) and the Stoke-on-Trent to London railway. The Caldon Canal and Trent and Mersey Canal link the conurbation with the Churnet Valley.*
- *The Sabrina Way, a section of the National Cycle Network and the Staffordshire Way pass through the area. Alton Towers is the most popular tourist destination in the NCA, together with a number of parks and gardens and pottery visitor centres."*

4.3 Local Landscape Character

Landscape Character Assessment of Staffordshire Moorlands (LSCA) 2008

- 4.3.1 The Site is located within Landscape Character Type (LCT) **Ancient Slope and Valley Farmlands** as defined within the Staffordshire Moorlands District Council's Regional Character Area 64.
- 4.3.2 Key characteristics of Regional Character Area 64 as described in the LSCA of Staffordshire Moorlands are:
- *"Strongly dissected hills and small plateaux, rising up to the Pennines and cut by major river valleys;*
 - *Strong contrast between remote uplands, urban areas, sheltered wooded valleys and hillside pastures;*
 - *Prominent Millstone Grit and Coal Measures ridges;*
 - *Sprawling industrial towns of the Potteries forming a major conurbation;*
 - *Extensive former industrial and extractive sites, many now reclaimed, intermixed with settlements and open land;*
 - *Open moorland and rough grazing on higher ground;*
 - *Rural settlement pattern of sheltered villages on low ground with hamlets, scattered farmsteads and cottages elsewhere; and*
 - *Brick and sandstone older buildings with tile and slate roofs."*
- 4.3.3 The Ancient Slope and Valley Farmland LCT covers a large proportion of Staffordshire Moorlands. The largest area extends from the northern boundary of the district, south to the A52 at Cellarhead and west to the boundary with Stoke-on-Trent.
- 4.3.4 The key characteristics of LCT Ancient Slope and Valley Farmlands are:

- *"Strongly undulating or sloping landscape cut by small scale steep sided stream valleys;*
- *Small scale mainly ancient irregular fields bounded by trees and hedgerows;*
- *Extensive views from higher ground;*
- *Intimate wooded valleys;*
- *Stone buildings and drystone walls towards uplands;*
- *Isolated properties;*
- *Narrow winding lanes;*
- *Parklands; and*
- *Quarrying"*

4.3.5 Key incongruous landscape features mentioned in the assessment that are relevant to the Site and the immediate character are:

- *"Electricity pylons are intrusive features visible in the landscape;*
- *Replacement of hedgerows and drystone walls by fencing;*
- *Busy roads;*
- *Quarrying and mining activities; and*
- *Localised industrial and residential development."*

4.3.6 The study area also lies within LCT **Gritstone Uplands**, which follows the ridgeline that runs north-south at Biddulph Moor, extending west, north of Biddulph to bound the gritstone edge that extends north-east from Mow Cop along the boundary with Cheshire.

4.3.7 The key characteristics of the LCT Gritstone Uplands are:

- *"Upland ridge landscape comprising strongly undulating slopes with localised steep sided valleys;*
- *Open upland plateau with extensive views;*
- *Scale of the landscape varies from small in the valley bottoms to medium on higher ground;*
- *Varying sized fields with deteriorating boundaries of hedgerows and some drystone walls;*
- *Scattered large farms with stone buildings which along with local settlements are becoming more urbanised;*
- *Trees groups around dwellings and vegetation along stream lines; and*
- *Historic Parkland at Biddulph Grange."*

Published Landscape Character Guidelines

4.3.8 With respect to LCT Ancient Slope and Valley Farmlands, landscape planning guidelines have been described in the LCSA and guidelines relevant to the Proposed Development include the following:

- *“Woodland planting of a small to medium scale is generally appropriate in this landscape, from field corner to field size, tying into the existing woodlands and hedgerows with attention to edge detail and predominantly of a broadleaved character;*
- *Planting, both trees and woodlands can be used effectively to reinforce the existing vegetational structure to enable it to more readily absorb new development and to screen the edges of existing settlement and industrial/commercial uses;*
- *The planting of small woodlands, hedgerows with associated trees and tree groups can help to restore the vegetational cover and re-articulate the scale of the landscape following its gradual erosion due to lack of maintenance of the hedgerow pattern;*
- *Although both broadleaves and conifer species occur in this landscape some earlier coniferous plantations were unsympathetic to the scale and character of the landscape. New plantings should be used to reduce the visual impact of tree older plantations;*
- *Care needs to be taken to avoid obscuring important viewpoints and maintaining the interrelationship of open areas to woodland blocks relating to local landscape scale and field pattern;*
- *Development and new tree planting should take account of the setting of the historic parklands, of the setting of important buildings and of important local views. Any proposals for development or land use change which impacts upon the setting of an historic parkland must take account of the unique character of that designed landscape;*
- *Care should be taken not to introduce unnecessary urban features into the rural scene (e.g. signage, urban road kerbs);*
- *The colour of prefabricated agricultural buildings should be determined taking careful account of position, predominant tones of adjacent vegetation, local materials and sky, so as to minimise the visual impact of the development; and*
- *The loss of semi-natural vegetation should be checked, and remaining habitats should be protected, managed and where possible extended to create sustainable communities.*

4.4 Published Landscape Character Receptors

4.4.1 On the basis of this review of published landscape character assessments and analysis of the landscape character of the Site and its context, the following LCTs have been identified against which effects resulting from the Proposed Development have been assessed.

- 4.4.2 An assessment of the receptor's value, susceptibility and resultant sensitivity to development of the type proposed has also been set out below. There are often subtle differences between and within individual LCTs that result in variations in both actual and perceived quality, condition, value and susceptibility to change. In addition to this, boundaries between LCTs do not always follow recognised landscape features such as rivers, settlement edges, roads or field boundaries. In these cases, the boundaries between LCTs are a transition, where there is a gradual change in character, that is often the case, with landscapes at the national and regional and district level.

Ancient Slopes and Valley Farmlands LCT

- 4.4.3 The LCT encompasses a large proportion of the Staffordshire Moorlands, the main land use is low intensity pastoral farming with electricity pylons forming intrusive features visible within the landscape. The Site is formed of a single pastoral field on low lying falling landform, which reflects the local and wider landscape. The quality of the local landscape is reduced by the existing settlement edge on higher ground to the west and the series of high voltage overhead powerlines and associated large pylons, which are located within the immediate setting to the west on higher landform. In addition to this the landscape to the immediate east of the Site contains mounds of tipped material, to include brick and tile. These urbanising and detracting features result in reducing the landscape quality and scenic value of the Site. The Site is part of a series of fields that are located along the shallow valley between Brown Edge in the east and Ball Green to the west. The valley floor and lower slopes are defined by a pastoral fieldscape that is defined by mature native hedgerows (although heavily maintained) with mature hedgerow trees. As such the landscape is considered to be in good condition with development for the most part limited to the upper slopes that ensures the development within the local area is more visible and has an urbanising influence on the local character of the area.
- 4.4.4 There are no internal landscape features with the only features of value being the mature hedgerows and hedgerows trees (mainly oak) that are located along the northern and southern Site boundaries. Therefore, the character and features within the Site are considered to represent the local character, albeit not rare. The Site is not located within or near a conservation area, the grassland that covers the Site is of low ecological value as a result of the extensive grazing, the only features of value being the mature boundary vegetation. The Site is not publicly accessible, however, there are a number of routes that cross the opposite valley side, these allow for views over the Site. The low-lying nature of the Site alongside the local mature vegetation framework limit the contribution the Site makes to the local character. Furthermore, the local settlement edge, road network, scattered farmsteads and overhead power lines with pylons serve to reduce the sense of ruralness and tranquillity of the area. There are no known cultural or historical associations with the Site. On this basis the LCA is judged to have **Medium** value.

- 4.4.5 The LCA covers the local and wider landscape to the north and east, the landscape beyond Bemersley Road to the west and within the wider area to the south is not covered by a landscape character assessment. Notable detractors include the adjacent overhead power lines and the existing land use to the east of the Site. There is the potential to include landscape enhancements as part of a Site wide landscape strategy, these would also seek to mitigate adverse effects arising from the Proposed Development in accordance with the published landscape guidelines.
- 4.4.6 On this basis, given the scale and nature of the Proposed Development and the Site, its low-lying nature, and the current level of enclosure provided by the existing mature vegetation it is considered that the LCA has the potential to accommodate the type of development proposed. Furthermore, there is the potential to provide addition landscape mitigation through hedgerow and tree planting to provide further mitigation. Overall, it is considered that the LCA has a **Medium** susceptibility to development of the type proposed.
- 4.4.7 The combination of the above value and sensitivity is judged to result in an overall **Medium** sensitivity to development of the type proposed:

Table 1: Summary of Sensitivity of Published Landscape Receptors

Receptor	Value	Susceptibility	Sensitivity
Ancient Slope and Valley Farmland LCT	Medium	Medium	Medium

5 Site Appraisal

5.1 Overview

- 5.1.1 A landscape appraisal has been undertaken to ascertain the existing landscape character of the Site. This is achieved through recording and analysing the existing landscape features and characteristics, the way the landscape is experienced, and the value or importance of the landscape and visual resources in the vicinity of the Site. The elements of the landscape that contribute to landscape character include the built and natural form, the pattern of features, detailing, scale, planting, land use and human perception. In this regard, landscape character is derived as a result of the perception of, and action and interaction between, natural and human factors.
- 5.1.2 The character and physical features of the Site are described below with reference to Site Appraisal Photographs (**SAP A – C**), included in **Appendix 3: Site Appraisal & Site Context Photographs**. The locations of photographic viewpoints are illustrated on **Figure 4: Site Appraisal Plan**.
- 5.1.3 As shown on **Figure 4**, the Site is a single arable field which will be accessed via a new track taken off Bemersley Road, this will also involve a new field access. The Site is bounded for the majority by mature native hedgerow (that are heavily maintained) with occasional hedgerow trees. **SAP A** and **SAP B** demonstrate the nature of rising landform as it rises from the eastern boundary, adjacent to which is bare ground and mounds of earth / rubble.
- 5.1.4 The existing Site boundary vegetation of fragmented hedgerow with post and wire fencing is evident with mature hedgerow trees to the northern and southern boundaries. These provide a degree of enclosure to the Site from the adjacent landscape. The existing high voltage overhead powerlines and associated pylons are visible on the higher ground across **SAP A** and **SAP B**.
- 5.1.5 **SAP C** is taken from the western Site boundary, from this more elevated position the valley floor within which the meandering tree belt that follows the Head of Trent is visible, beyond this the eastern valley side rises with pastoral fields bound by mature hedgerow and hedgerow trees defining the lower slopes, the upper slopes of the local shallow valley.

5.2 Landscape Receptors

- 5.2.1 On the basis of the Site Appraisal the following landscape features have been identified as receptors for the assessment of effects arising from the Proposed Development, including an assessment of their value, susceptibility, and resultant sensitivity to development of the type proposed.

Pasture Field

- 5.2.2 Pastoral land is a common feature in the immediate, local and wider landscape, and land within the Site, which comprises the majority of the Site, is current regularly grazed, and as such is devoid of any notable internal vegetation and is therefore of low quality. The Site is enclosed by existing vegetation with the lower lying eastern part of the Site being more heavily screened by existing vegetation which results in the reducing the contribution the overall Site makes to the prevailing landscape character. On this basis, the value of the feature is considered to be **Medium**.
- 5.2.3 The character of the field is influenced by its proximity to the existing settlement edge and the overhead powerlines and associated pylons to the south west and west, respectively. In addition to this the presence of the nearby road network, the scale and extent of existing development increases upon higher ground, with a number of large farmsteads located midway up the valley sides with the village of Brown Edge to the east, Ball Green to the south-west and further residential development to the south along Endon Road. Any development within the Site would alter the character of the Site and result in eroding the open nature of this feature. It therefore has a **High** susceptibility to the type of development proposed. In combination, these factors give rise to a **Medium – High** sensitivity.

Landform

- 5.2.4 Topographically the Appeal Site lies on the western slope of a valley that follows an approximate north-south alignment. The Site and its access road therefore fall to the east into this valley. As illustrated at **Figure 2: Topography Plan**, Bemersley Road follows a local ridgeline at approximately 185m AOD in the vicinity of the site access. The Main body of the Site falls from 170m AOD to 145m AOD. On balance, the landform is considered to be highly representative of the area, and its value is judged to be **Medium**, with a **Medium** susceptibility to the Proposed Development, resulting in a **Medium** sensitivity.

Native Hedgerow

- 5.2.5 The hedgerows on Site are in relatively good condition albeit with a number of gaps notably within the northern and southern hedgerows. On this basis they are considered to have **Low** value. In general hedgerows are considered to have high potential for retention and enhancement as part of development of the type proposed, and are readily replaced, resulting in **Low** susceptibility. In combination, these factors give rise to a **Low** sensitivity.

Hedgerow Trees

- 5.2.6 All hedgerow trees are located within and as part of the boundary vegetation structure, these are in a fair condition and not subject to a tree preservation order (TPO). The trees are neither rare nor exhibit notable scenic qualities. The trees do provide an overall positive contribution

to landscape character as part of the local field boundary vegetation structure that define the pastoral landscape, therefore this feature is considered to have **Medium** value. The trees are located within historic field boundaries, which would be protected and retained as part of the scheme. On this basis, the susceptibility of the receptor is judged to be **Low**. Therefore, the overall sensitivity of the receptor is **Medium**.

Character of the Site and its Immediate Vicinity

- 5.2.7 The Site and its immediate context are not designated for scenic beauty and comprise relatively common components and characteristics. The landscape is generally in good condition and has some scenic value, although is not perceived as remote. On this basis this receptor is judged to have **Medium** value.
- 5.2.8 The Site lies on falling landform with a degree of mature boundary vegetation, the character is heavily influenced by its use for grazing and the urbanising features and development within the immediate and local landscape to the west, south west, east and south. Beyond the immediate Site boundary, the appreciation of the ground plain to the north, south and west reduce immediately as a result of landform and mature vegetation. Due to the Site being located on the western valley side there is a greater appreciation of the Site from the eastern valley side. Given the small scale of the Proposed Development and the high potential to include appropriate mitigation - that would be characteristic in the landscape, such as native grassland, hedgerow, and tree planting it is considered the receptor has the scope to accommodate development of the type proposed, and the susceptibility is considered to be **Medium**. On this basis, the overall sensitivity is judged to be **Medium**.
- 5.2.9 The following table summarises the sensitivities of the identified receptors:

Table 2: Summary of Sensitivity of Landscape Receptors

Landscape Receptors	Value	Susceptibility	Sensitivity
Pasture Field	Medium	High	Medium - High
Landform	Medium	Medium	Medium
Native Hedgerow	Low	Low	Low
Hedgerow Trees	Medium	Low	Medium - Low
Character of the Site and its Immediate Vicinity	Medium	Medium	Medium

6 Visual Appraisal

6.1 Overview

- 6.1.1 A visual appraisal was undertaken to determine the relationship of the Site with its surroundings and the approximate extent of its visibility within the wider landscape as experienced from publicly accessible viewpoints (roads, footways, public rights of way and open spaces). The visibility of the Site is predominantly influenced by landform and the extent and type of vegetation cover and built elements within the surrounding landscape. Baseline studies of these features enabled the identification of the potential visibility of the Site from the surrounding area to be tested through fieldwork.
- 6.1.2 The visual appraisal focuses on the visibility of the main part of the Site and does not include the extension of the application boundary to incorporate the access road from Bemersley Road. The changes proposed therein are not considered to have the potential to lead to any appreciable visual effects.
- 6.1.3 A series of Site Context Photographs (SCPs) and Photomontages have been taken to demonstrate the existing views and overall visibility of the Site; the locations are shown on **Figure 5: Visual Appraisal Plan**. **SCP 1 - 12** are presented in **Appendix 3: Site Appraisal & Site Context Photographs** and **Appendix 4: Photomontages**, with a description of the baseline visual characteristics of the Site set out below.

6.2 Close Range Views

- 6.2.1 **SCP 1** and **SCP 2** are taken from along Bemersley Road, from which access is currently taken, as a result of the falling landform with the wider Site located on the lower slopes. **SCP 3** demonstrates views from residential properties at Heather View, approximately 150m to the south of the Site at the closest point, from this point there are no views over the Site.
- 6.2.2 It has been assessed that receptors to the west of the Site will not have any views towards the Proposed Development.

6.3 Middle Range Views

- 6.3.1 **SCP 4**, **SCP 5**, **SCP 6** and **SCP 7** demonstrate the view from PRow Footpath 13 - which forms part of the Staffordshire Walks and the Brown Edge Green Vale Walk. The route passes through a number of pastoral fields located on the lower eastern valley slope. From this location there are open views towards and over the higher western part of the Site within the lower eastern part of the site heavily / partially screening by the intervening vegetation associated with the water course that flows within the valley bottom.

- 6.3.2 **SCP 8** is taken from PRoW 6, which also forms part of the Staffordshire Walks and the Brown Edge Green Vale Walk. The route heads south from Woodhouse Lane, with views towards and over the Site possible where the field boundary vegetation is missing. From this location there are partial views over the higher western part of the Site with glimpsed filtered views of the lower eastern part.
- 6.3.3 There is potential for middle-distance views from the residential estate to the north of Endon Road, approximately 860 - 920m to the south-east, as illustrated by **SCP 15** and **SCP 16**. From here there are views along the valley floor towards the Site, with the higher ground within the western part of the Site visible in the views, the existing mature vegetation to the valley floor heavily filters and screens the lower-eastern part of the Site in these views.

6.4 Long Range Views

- 6.4.1 In long distance views from the higher ground on the eastern valley slopes, **SCP 10**, **SCP 11**, and **SCP 12** demonstrate views from the village of Brown Edge. **SCP 13** demonstrates the view from the localised high point within Marshes Hill Common. There are partial and glimpsed views from these locations, with the Site forming part of the lower lying valley as views extend over the wider landscape to include Ball Green and the wider settlement of Stoke on Trent (**SCP 11** and **SCP 13**). Where the Site is visible, only the higher ground within the western part of the Site is visible, with the lower-lying eastern part heavily filtered.
- 6.4.2 Further long-distance views are possible from the south east along the ridgeline, with views over the valley towards the Site possible from Wilfred Lane (**SCP 14**), approximately 1.73km from the Site. The landform within the wider landscape, beyond Baddeley Green, allows for long views down the valley and towards the Site (**SCP 17**). From these elevated locations wide, panoramic views are possible with the Site barely visible.

6.5 Visual Receptors

Walkers using PRoW 13: Brown Edge Green Vale Walk (**SCP 4 - 7**)

- 6.5.1 Views are from a recognised LDR and locally promoted route and have some local cultural associations, therefore judged to have a **Medium** value. Users of the footpath whose attention is likely to be focused on the landscape are judged to have a **High** susceptibility to development of the type proposed and therefore to have a **Medium - High** sensitivity.

Walkers using PRoW 6: Brown Edge Green Vale Walk (**SCP 8**)

- 6.5.2 Views are from a recognised LDR and locally promoted route and have some local cultural associations, therefore judged to have a **Medium** value. Users of the footpath whose attention is likely to be focused on the landscape are judged to have a **High** susceptibility to development of the type proposed and therefore to have a **Medium - High** sensitivity.

Walkers using PRow 8 (SCP 9)

- 6.5.3 Views are from a location that is not designated, has minimal cultural associations, resulting in a **Low** value. Users of the footpath whose attention is likely to be focused on the landscape are judged to have a **High** susceptibility to development of the type proposed and therefore considered to have **Medium** sensitivity.

Walkers using PRow 15 & Residents at the western edge of Brown Edge (SCP 10)

- 6.5.4 Views are from a location that is not designated, has minimal cultural associations, resulting in a **Low** value. Users of the footpath whose attention is likely to be focused on the landscape have a **High** susceptibility to the type of development proposed and overall have a **Medium** sensitivity. People at their place of residence are also considered to have a **High** susceptibility to change, therefore overall have a **Medium** sensitivity.

Residents within Brown Edge (SCP 11)

- 6.5.5 Views from this location are not designated with no cultural associations, resulting in a **Low** value. People at their place of residence naturally have a **High** susceptibility to change, therefore overall have a **Medium** sensitivity.

Walkers using PRow 32 (SCP 12)

- 6.5.6 Views are from a location that is not designated, has minimal cultural associations, resulting in a **Low** value. Receptors are users of the footpath whose attention is likely to be focused on the landscape, therefore they are judged to have a **High** susceptibility to development of the type proposed. They are therefore considered to have **Medium** sensitivity.

Walkers using Marshes Hill Common (SCP 13)

- 6.5.7 Views are from a local nature reserve, which includes an area of high ground that provides views over the surrounding area and as such has some local cultural associations as part of locally promoted Brown Edge Green Vale Walk. Views are therefore judged to have a **Medium** value. Receptors are users of the footpath which passes through open countryside and whose attention is likely to be focused on the landscape and are judged to have a **High** susceptibility to development of the type proposed. They are therefore considered to have **Medium - High** sensitivity.

Users of Willfield Lane (SCP 14)

- 6.5.8 Views are from a location that is not designated, with minimal cultural/historical associations, resulting in a **Low** value. Receptors are people travelling along a secondary road where there is a level of appreciation of the local landscape and as such have a **Medium** susceptibility, resulting in an overall **Medium** sensitivity.

Walkers using PRoW 6 & Residents north of Endon Road (SCP 15 & SCP 16)

- 6.5.9 Views are from a location that is not designated, has minimal cultural associations, resulting in a **Low** value. Receptors are users of the footpath whose attention is likely to be focused on the landscape and are considered to have a **High** susceptibility. They are therefore considered to have **Medium** sensitivity. People at their place of residence are also considered to have a **High** susceptibility to change, therefore overall have a **Medium** sensitivity.

Users of Greenway Hall Road (SCP 17)

- 6.5.10 Views are from a location that is not designated, with minimal cultural/historical associations, resulting in a **Low** value. Receptors are people travelling along a secondary road where there is a level of appreciation of the local landscape and as such have a **Medium** susceptibility, resulting in an overall **Medium - Low** sensitivity.

- 6.5.11 The following table summarises the sensitivities of the identified visual receptors:

Table 3: Summary of Sensitivity of Visual Receptors

Visual Receptors	Value	Susceptibility	Sensitivity
Walkers using PRoW 13	Medium	High	Medium - High
Walkers using PRoW 6	Medium	High	Medium - High
Walkers using PRoW 8	Low	High	Medium
Walkers using PRoW 15 & Residents of Brown Edge	Low	High	Medium
Residents within Brown Edge	Low	High	Medium
Walkers using PRoW 32	Low	High	Medium
Walkers using Marshes Hill Common	Medium	High	Medium - High
Users of Willfield Lane	Low	Medium	Medium - Low
Walkers using PRoW 6 & Residents of Endon Road	Low	High	Medium
Users of Greenway Hall Road	Low	Medium	Medium - Low

7 Development Proposals

7.1 Overview

7.1.1 The proposed Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) is capable of importing and exporting approximately 50 Megawatts (MW) of electricity.

7.1.2 In preparing this Hearing, the Appellant has considered the potential for minor changes to the proposed layout and battery types to include the latest battery technology and specifications and proposes to submit revised plans in due course. These changes, in broad terms:

- Rationalise the layout of cabinets and batteries;
- Reduce the overall area covered by cabinets and batteries;
- Move the development area away from the eastern boundary;
- Introduce a dedicated turning area within the site.;
- Allow for associated landscaping and screening enhancements; and
- Replace the proposed larger acoustic screen with a landscape design led screen solution which provides further visual benefits.

7.1.3 The updated design of the Proposed Development is set out on the following drawings:

- C0002462_02_PL Site Layout RevJ;
- C0002462_03_Location & Block Plan_RevC;
- C0002462_04 ESS Container LV Sub Plan and Elevations RevC;
- C0002462_05 Typical Fence Detail_RevA;
- C0002462_06 132kV Substation Plan and Elevations RevD;
- C0002462_08 Customer Substation Plan and Elevations_RevC; and
- C0002462_10 Site Levelling Elevations_RevH.

7.1.4 The key elements of the proposal are as follows:

- Energy storage container units containing the batteries, associated control equipment, PCS inverters, cooling system and fire safety equipment;
- A 132kV substation compound, with a maximum height of 5.5m, with a District Network operator (DNO) substation (up to a height of 3.75m), customer substation (up to a height of 3.54m) and a communications hub;

- A dedicated access track and turning area;
- Security fencing and enclosures. The batteries will be enclosed with deer fencing which comprises of timber posts and wire mesh, with the 132kV substation enclosed with palisade fencing for safety and security purposes;
- Low Voltage (LV) substations each with a transformer installed with the rows of battery cabinets. The LV cabins are typically 3.5m high, 14.4m long and 5m wide which will be painted green. The transformers are generally 2.5m high, 1.5m long and 2.5m wide;
- High Voltage (HV) switchgear is required to accumulate all the HV cables from the transformers before connecting to the grid network;
- Before connection to the grid, the Distribution Network Provider (DNO) requires an Intake Substation with various protection settings to protect the grid from any faults that the BESS may cause. This intake substation will be built in compliance with building materials approved by the local planning authority; and
- A security system is required to prevent both unauthorised access into the battery storage system, and to protect the equipment. In addition to the proposed fencing, a security beam system will also be installed around the fence perimeter. The security beams will be raised approximately 1.2m off the ground and will employ laser technology, meaning no artificial lighting will be required.

7.1.5 The construction of the Site will take approximately 36 weeks with 4 - 5 commercial vehicles on average anticipated to visit the site daily. The battery banks, substations and other construction materials will be delivered to Site using 16.5-metre-long articulated lorries.

7.1.6 Once constructed, access to the BESS will typically generate one van accessing the application Site twice a month i.e. two two-way vehicle movements per month.

7.1.7 The proposed development will have a relatively low impact on the existing ground conditions and will not have significant foundation or infrastructure requirements. It is intended that the BESS will have a lifespan of 40 years. At the end of its operational life, the infrastructure will be removed from the Site, and the field will be returned to its previous condition and can be returned to agricultural use.

7.2 Landscape Strategy

7.2.1 Based on the landscape baseline analysis, including the site and context appraisals, visual appraisal, and reviews of policy and published landscape character assessment and guidance, landscape mitigation measures have been included in the Proposed Development with the aim of reducing adverse effects on landscape character and visual amenity.

7.2.2 These are illustrated on **Figure 7: Landscape Strategy Plan** and include the following measures:

- A comprehensive hedgerow improvement strategy including reinforcement of existing hedgerows and replanting of remnant or 'gappy' field boundaries with an appropriate species rich native planting palette. Existing and proposed hedgerow planting will assist in visually breaking up the Proposed Development and will enhance the habitat value and connectivity on the Site;
- Provision of a new native hedgerow, this will link into the existing field boundary structure and provide enhanced connectivity between the existing hedgerow network to the north and south of the Site;
- Native hedgerow tree planting will be established within both existing and proposed native hedgerow to increase the canopy cover and reinforce this typical landscape feature;
- Provision of a substantial area of scrub vegetation interspersed with scattered trees within the eastern part of the Site, this connects to the existing vegetation structure seeking to reinforce the sylvan character of the valley floor, this also helps to mitigate the impact of the Proposed Development of views experienced by receptors in this location;
- Creation of wildflower meadow grassland, totalling approximately 8400sqm, within and around the Proposed Development, maximising the potential for biodiversity enhancements in accordance with the NPPF;

7.2.3 Also included at **Figure 7**, is an outline landscape and management specification setting out the strategy for maintenance of existing and proposed landscape features in order to secure the successful establishment of the mitigation measures.

7.2.4 The landscape strategy includes areas of grassland, hedgerow, tree and scrub planting, that once mature will provide increased screening to the Proposed Development at Year 15. As a result, it also has the potential to deliver substantial benefits in terms of landscape features, character, and biodiversity.

8 Green Belt

8.1 Overview

- 8.1.1 The Staffordshire Moorlands District Council Green Belt Review Study was prepared as part of the Local Plan evidence base to review the Green Belt across the District.
- 8.1.2 Part 1 is strategic in nature and reviews the contribution of land to Green Belt purposes as set out in the NPPF. Part 2 considers specific sites proposed for development and land with potential for release and makes recommendations on land which could be considered for release.
- 8.1.3 The Staffordshire Moorlands District Council Green Belt review (GB) assesses these in terms of their contribution to the purposes of Green Belt based on the following criteria:
- Significant Contribution;
 - Contribution; and
 - Limited Contribution.
- 8.1.4 The character of the Green Belt within Staffordshire Moorlands is diverse, reflecting the sharp gradient from the generally well-defined urban edge of Stoke-on-Trent to what are relatively remote rural areas. In this respect the Study concluded that Green Belt serves its primary function of helping to contain the Stoke on-Trent conurbation, in particular creating a clearly defined separation between town and country on its eastern fringes.
- 8.1.5 More widely, the Study considered the Green Belt to be performing a clear function in respect of the various aspects of five strategic Green Belt purposes as identified in the NPPF, in particular:
- A Significant Contribution made by land in the immediate fringe of the conurbation of Stoke-on Trent maintaining a clear distinction between town and country, and land between Congleton and Biddulph where there is danger of merger along the A527 corridor;
 - A Contribution made by all other parcels, for varying reasons but principally protecting the openness of very accessible countryside by preventing incremental urbanisation; and
 - No land identified as overall making a Limited Contribution to Green Belt purposes.
- 8.1.6 There are no parcels which do not make at least a contribution to one or more of the purposes of Green Belt, and most perform multiple functions.

- 8.1.7 Part 1 of the Study identifies the Site as being located within **Parcel N19 - Land to the northwest of Brown Edge**. As per Figure ES1 - Overall Contribution to Green Belt Purposes, Parcel N19 is identified as:

"makes a contribution to Green Belt purposes indicating that the purposes are partially being fulfilled and that the boundary could be revised in light of other planning factors."

- 8.1.8 With a combined area of 1.85ha, the extent of Parcel N19 (354.65ha) occupied by the Site equated to approximately 0.52%.
- 8.1.9 **Table 4** below sets out the findings of the Staffordshire Moorlands District Council Green Belt review (GB) with respect to Parcel N19:

Table 4: Staffordshire Moorlands District Council Green Belt Review Study

Green Belt Purpose	Assessment	Contribution
Purpose 1: to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas	Complementing parcel N18 immediately to the north, N20 to the south, along with Green Belt within Stoke-on-Trent Council boundary, this parcel helps to contain the conurbation of Stoke-on-Trent to the west, and a strong sense of separation provided by the highly visible, open countryside of this locality (as seen from Marshes Hill to the north of Brown Edge, for example).	Significant Contribution
Purpose 2: to prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another	No clear role	Limited Contribution
Purpose 3: to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	Part of a suite of parcels which fringe the Stoke-on-Trent conurbation and are integral to maintaining the rural character of the land within Staffordshire Moorlands District.	Significant Contribution
Purpose 4: to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns	No clear role	Limited Contribution
Purpose 5: to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land	Contributes to the broader role of the Green Belt in promoting re-use of brownfield land in Stoke, although the precise extent of the contribution to this role of the land in this location is difficult to determine.	Contribution

8.2 Contribution of the Site to the Green Belt

- 8.2.1 The parcel identified in the Council's Green Belt Review Study does not relate to the boundaries of the Site and encompasses a much larger area than the Site itself, thereby limiting the relevance of the assessment's findings to the contribution of the Site in isolation.
- 8.2.2 Accordingly, we have undertaken a site-specific Green Belt Assessment in accordance with the Green Belt Assessment methodology, included in **Appendix 1**. The assessment considers the contribution of the Site to the four purposes of Green Belt based on the methodology criteria.
- 8.2.3 With respect to the fifth purpose of the Green Belt "*to assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land*", the Site is not considered derelict or other urban land, however, should the Site be brought forward for development it would not prejudice derelict or other urban land being brought forward for urban regeneration. Notwithstanding this, the principle of retaining land within the Green Belt holds true for all areas within the Green Belt, therefore the Site is considered to make the same contribution to this purpose of the Green Belt as any other land parcel within the Green Belt.
- 8.2.4 The assessment at **Table 5** considers the intrinsic contribution of the Site to the purposes of Green Belt, with respect to development the type proposed:

Table 5: Site-Specific Green Belt Assessment

Green Belt Purpose	Assessment	Contribution
Purpose 1: to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas	The Site is small and located on lower lying landform, restricting the contribution the Site makes to the local landscape character. The Site is located away from the existing settlement edge which follows the localised ridgeline to the south-west. On this basis, development within the Site would not be perceived as an extension of the existing settlement.	Limited Contribution
Purpose 2: to prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another	The Site is located outside and away from both the nearby settlement boundaries of Ball Green and Brown Edge. The existing physical barriers, distance, topography and surrounding land uses ensure that there will be no perception of the merging of these settlements.	No Contribution

Purpose 3: to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	As the Site is located within the countryside any development would be considered as encroachment. However, the local landscape contains a number of farmsteads and energy infrastructure that reduce the sense of rural countryside. Given the location of the Proposed Development on lower lying landform, together with the characteristics of and scale of the Site within the surrounding area, the level of encroachment is considered to be Moderate / Limited .	Moderate / Limited Contribution
Purpose 4: to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns	There are no listed building / conservation areas / or landscape designations within the immediate setting or local area.	No Contribution

- 8.2.5 When considered in the round, the Site is located on lower lying landform, and away from the existing settlement edge which lies along the localised ridgeline to the south-west. This diminishes the contribution the Site makes to the local landscape character, and materially limits the Site's contribution to checking sprawl or preventing coalescence. There is currently no development within the Site and as such it does contribute to safeguarding the countryside. This results in the Site providing a **Moderate / Limited** contribution to this purpose. The Site is not located within or near a historic town and therefore does not contribute to this purpose.
- 8.2.6 In addition to the purposes of the Green Belt, an essential characteristic of the Green Belt as set out in the Framework, is its openness. Openness can be considered by definition (absence of built development in principle); spatially/volumetrically (how much openness is taken up by built development); or in terms of a visual aspect (how the openness or its loss is perceived visually). Openness can also be considered in terms of the duration of the development, its remediability, and the degree of activity likely to be generated.
- 8.2.7 Whilst it is acknowledged that the Proposed Development is inappropriate development in the Green Belt, the temporary lifespan and full reversibility of impacts, together with the Limited impact and harm, should be given appropriate consideration. Inevitably, there will be a change to the openness arising from the Proposed Development, as the existing field is currently free from development and will subsequently contain a level of built form. The proposals will also result in a change to the visual openness of the Site. The access track would result in a change to the higher ground within the Site, with the majority of the proposed built form located on lower lying landform that is currently provided a level of enclosure by the existing mature vegetation that serves to screen and filter views into this part of the Site, in particular from the Brown Edge Green Vale Walk on the eastern side of the valley. There will be very little traffic generated by the proposals.

9 Assessment of Effects

9.1 Overview

- 9.1.1 This section sets out the anticipated landscape and visual effects resulting from the Proposed Development at **Year 1** and **Year 15** after completion, the latter taking into account the substantive establishment of the planting proposals. Woodland planting is anticipated to grow at a rate of approximately 1m every 3 years, whilst it is assumed that reinforced and proposed hedgerows around the Site will have reached full maturity and a height of 2 - 3m.
- 9.1.2 It is acknowledged that the construction phase will result in a number of temporary alterations to landscape character and visual amenity through the addition of plant, machinery and construction traffic movements in the landscape together with groundworks and construction of the facility and landscape implementation operations. In this regard the effects that will occur during construction will typically be adverse in nature and fluctuating in intensity due to the different operations occurring on the Site. However, due to the limited duration of the construction programme these effects will only be experienced for a brief period, thereby reducing their significance and extent to which they will be experienced.
- 9.1.3 Accordingly, a detailed assessment of the likely effects to arise during the construction phase is not included within this LVIA in line with best practice guidance and the need for proportionality in assessments.

9.2 Effects on Landscape Features

Pasture Field - **Medium** – **High** sensitivity

- 9.2.1 The introduction of the Proposed Development will change the character of the Site, which will reduce the perceived openness of this receptor. However, given the location and scale of the proposals this will result in an indiscernible change to the prevailing agricultural character of the wider context. The development will not form a dominant feature as result of it having a limited scale and massing. In addition to this the proposals do not cover the full extent of the Site, with an area set aside to establish native grassland, hedgerow with hedgerow trees, and woodland with the boundary vegetation structure enhanced within additional planting, this will increase the biodiversity value of the Site. Furthermore, the physical changes to the feature are readily reversible on decommissioning of the Proposed Development after 40 years, with the Site returning to its former use, albeit within an enhanced vegetation framework.
- 9.2.2 On this basis, the magnitude of effect is considered to be **Medium**, resulting in a **Moderate** (adverse) effect at **Year 1**, which will remain at **Year 15**.

Landform – Medium sensitivity

- 9.2.3 The proposed changes to this receptor are illustrated on drawing **C0002462_10 Site Levelling Elevations_RevH**. The access road will require a moderate degree of cut to accommodate the required change in level, particularly in the north-western corner of the pasture field. The substation compound within the north-eastern part of the field requires a level ground plain, so the spoil arising from the cut operations to facilitate the access road will be used to create an embankment to the east of the substation, thereby creating a level development platform. There is also a degree of cut and fill to accommodate the battery container area to the south-east of the field, elevating the eastern edge and cutting into the landform to the west. The battery containers are then levelled using specially designed helical screw piles or similar).
- 9.2.4 The magnitude of change to the landform is judged to be **Medium**, resulting in a **Moderate** (adverse) effect at **Year 1**. This level of effect will remain at **Year 15**.

Native Hedgerow - Low sensitivity

- 9.2.5 The Proposed Development will result in the loss of a short section of existing hedgerow to the south of the access off Bemersley Road required to provide suitable visibility. However, as illustrated on **Figure 7: Landscape Strategy Plan**, the Proposed Development includes the enhancement of the existing field boundary hedgerows, which would be enhanced with additional native hedgerow planting and hedgerow trees where possible. Further to this a new hedgerow is proposed through the Site, which will provide enhanced connectivity with the existing hedgerow framework.
- 9.2.6 On this basis, the magnitude of effect will be **Very Small**. Whilst the benefit of newly planted hedgerow is limited, the scale of new planting is considered to result in an overall **Negligible** (beneficial) significance of effect at **Year 1**.
- 9.2.7 Following establishment of the new hedgerow planting and reinforcement of the existing vegetation structure, this receptor will benefit from a considerable improvement in both quality and quantity. This will enhance this characteristic landscape features that is considered to result in a **Medium** magnitude of effect and a **Minor** (beneficial) effect significance at **Year 15**.

Hedgerow Trees – Medium – Low sensitivity

- 9.2.8 No hedgerow trees will be affected by the Proposed Development due to the nature of the proposals. In addition to this, the landscape strategy includes a substantial number of new trees with both the existing and proposed hedgerow with the scheme also providing an area of scrub within the eastern part of the Site. At **Year 1**, this planting is unlikely to contribute measurably to the quality or value of the receptor as a whole. As such the magnitude of effect will be **Very Small**, with a resultant **Negligible** (beneficial) effect.

- 9.2.9 At **Year 15**, with the establishment of new planting within both the area of scrub and boundary hedgerows, the Proposed Development will result in a notable change, and a resultant increase in tree cover and overall improvement to this receptor as a whole. On balance it is considered that magnitude of effect will increase to **Small**, with a resultant **Minor** (beneficial) effect.

Character of the Site and its Immediate Vicinity - Medium sensitivity

- 9.2.10 The character of the Site and the surrounding area is predominantly semi-rural, with notable urban influences from detracting features within the immediate and local area including existing dispersed groups of settlement, overhead high voltage powerlines and associated large pylons. These cast an influence of infrastructure on the character of the Site, despite its function as a pastoral field.
- 9.2.11 The Proposed Development has been carefully located within the Site, this has required an amount of reprofiling of the landform and as such will change the topography within various parts of the Site. There is an existing degree of enclosure provided by the combination of landform and mature vegetation structure to the Site boundary and within the immediate setting. This, alongside the overall scale of the proposal, limits the effects of the Proposed Development on the local and wider landscape from the outset. The landscape enhancements will provide further containment to the Site and the Proposed Development whilst also resulting in an increase in biodiversity and ecological potential of the Site through the introduction of native grassland, increased hedgerow and tree planting, albeit these measures will have a limited impact at **Year 1**. The Proposed Development has a restricted height, unsubstantial massing and emits little in the way of noise, smells or perception of activity, which limits the potential for adverse effects to be experienced.
- 9.2.12 The Site itself is located on the lower valley slopes which restricts its contribution to the local and wider landscape setting with the Site not being perceived as part of the wider more elevated landscape. The Proposed Development will not permanently alter its character; however, it will materially change the appearance of the Site. On this basis, at **Year 1** the Proposed Development will result in a **Medium** magnitude of effect and a resultant **Moderate** (adverse) level of effect.
- 9.2.13 The magnitude of effect will reduce by **Year 15**, upon the maturation of the proposed landscape planting matures to provide a greater level of enclosure. However, it is still considered to result in a **Minor** (adverse) level of effect. Nonetheless, the changes introduced by the Proposed Development are reversible and temporary with a lifespan of 40 years, where the changes to the topography of the Site can be addressed through a planning condition to deliver a Soil Management Strategy to detail the process required to return the pasture field to its original condition.

Ancient Slope and Valley Farmland LCT – **Low** sensitivity

- 9.2.14 The scale of the Proposed Development will result in barely perceptible direct adverse effects on an extremely small extent of the LCT due to the nature and scale of the proposals within the Site, with barely any change to the open rural character perceived from higher ground to the south west. The Proposed Development has a restricted height, unsubstantial massing and emits little noise, smells or perception of activity, which further limits the potential for adverse effects. The design of the Proposed Development has been carefully considered to locate development so that it is provided a degree of screening from the surrounding mature vegetation structure, provides a strong degree of enclosure and separation from the immediate setting to the north and the local and wider landscape to the south and west, limiting the potential for widespread intervisibility.
- 9.2.15 On balance, due the limited extent of the LCT affected by the Proposed Development, it is considered to give rise to a **Very Small** magnitude of effect, at most, and a resultant barely perceptible deterioration, equating to a **Negligible** (adverse) significance of effect at **Year 1**.
- 9.2.16 Once the proposed landscape strategy has matured the influence and visibility of the proposals will further reduce. This would result in adverse effects reducing to **Negligible** (adverse) / **Neutral** by **Year 15**. Furthermore, the changes introduced by the Proposed Development are reversible and temporary with a lifespan of 40 years.

9.3 Effects on Visual Amenity

- 9.3.1 A series of Site Context Photographs (SCP) and photomontages have been taken to demonstrate the existing views and overall visibility of the Site; the locations are shown on **Figure 5: Visual Appraisal Plan** with **SCP 1 - 12** presented in **Appendix C: LVIA Site Appraisal & Site Context Photographs**. Photomontages are included at **Appendix D: LVIA Photomontages** to illustrate the layout submitted for planning, and at **Appendix E: Updated Photomontages** using the same methodology to illustrate the current proposals (RevJ).

Walkers using PRow 13: Brown Edge Green Vale Walk (**SCP 4 – 7**, Photomontages 3 & 4)

- 9.3.2 Users of the PRow are travelling within the immediate setting to the east of the Site, from this location there are views over falling agricultural land in the foreground, which allow for views over and toward the rising landform beyond. The Site is most evident from directly opposite and is seen beyond and above the intervening mature vegetation associated within the watercourse that runs through the valley floor. This existing vegetation restricts views during the winter months, whilst during the summer months there will be a greater level of screening provided when the vegetation is in leaf. Users will also be aware of the existing settlement edge, with development visible on the skyline, and notable high voltage overhead powerlines crossing the view on higher ground, as illustrated by **SCP 4 – 7** (Photomontage 3 & 4).

- 9.3.3 Where visible the built elements of the Proposed Development will be glimpsed through, and partially visible above, the existing intervening woodland. The Proposed Development will also be seen in the context of the overhead powerlines and associated large pylons alongside the settlement edge. The restricted height and unsubstantial massing of the proposals will limit the potential for effects to be perceived. The proposed landscape enhancements to the Site will result in views of the introduced built elements gradually becoming more filtered, albeit at the outset this will be very minimal. At **Year 1** that the proposals will result in a noticeable change to the overall visual experience, equating to a **Medium** magnitude of change and **Moderate** (adverse) level of effect.
- 9.3.4 At **Year 15**, following establishment of the proposed planting, the hedgerow reinforcement, hedgerow trees and tree planting will provide a degree of additional mitigation. The built elements of the Proposed Development will benefit from enhanced screening and containment, allowing the proposals to further assimilate and integrate within the landscape. The magnitude of effect will reduce to **Small**, resulting in a **Minor** (adverse) level of effect.

Walkers using PRoW 6: Brown Edge Green Vale Walk (SCP 8, Photomontage 5)

- 9.3.5 Users of the PRoW will experience similar views to those using the footpath further to the north, from this location to the south east, views look over falling agricultural land within the immediate foreground, which allow for views over and toward the rising landform beyond. The intervening mature vegetation associated within the watercourse that runs through the valley floor restricts views over the Site during the winter months, with views in the summer months being further screened when the intervening vegetation is in leaf. Users will have a greater appreciation of the existing settlement edge, development is visible on the skyline, with notable high voltage overhead powerlines crossing the view on higher ground, as illustrated by **SCP 8** and Photomontage 5.
- 9.3.6 Where visible the built elements of the Proposed Development will be glimpsed through, and partially above, the intervening woodland. They will also be seen in the context of the overhead powerlines and associated large pylons alongside the settlement edge. In addition to this the restricted height and unsubstantial massing of the Proposed Development limits the potential for effects to be perceived. The proposed landscape enhancements to the Site will result in views of the built elements gradually becoming more filtered, albeit at the outset this would be minimal. At **Year 1** the proposals will result in a noticeable change to the view, equating to a **Medium** magnitude of change, resulting in a **Moderate** (adverse) level of effect.
- 9.3.7 At **Year 15**, following establishment of the proposed planting, the hedgerow reinforcement, hedgerow trees and tree planting will provide a degree of additional mitigation. The built elements of the Proposed Development will benefit from enhanced screening and containment, allowing the proposals to further assimilate and integrate within the landscape. The magnitude of effect will reduce to **Small**, resulting in a **Minor** (adverse) level of effect.

Walkers using PRoW 8 (SCP 9)

- 9.3.8 The users of PRoW 8 have more elevated views of the Site, however the composition and nature of the view will remain similar to those from the lower lying route. Views look over falling agricultural land within the immediate foreground, which allow for views over and toward the Site and the rising landform beyond. The intervening mature vegetation associated with the watercourse that runs through the valley floor restricts views during the winter months, with views in the summer months being further screened when the intervening vegetation is in leaf. Users will have a greater appreciation of the existing settlement edge, with development is visible on the skyline, and notable high voltage overhead powerlines crossing the view on higher ground, as illustrated by **SCP 9**.
- 9.3.9 Where visible the built elements of the Proposed Development will be partially visible above the intervening woodland. The proposals will also be seen in the context of the overhead powerlines and associated large pylons alongside the settlement edge, which is more evident from the higher ground. In addition to this, the restricted height and unsubstantial massing of the Proposed Development limits the potential for effects to be perceived. The proposed landscape enhancements to the Site will result in views of the built elements gradually becoming more filtered, albeit at the outset this would be minimal. Therefore, it is considered at **Year 1** the proposals will result in a noticeable change to the view, equating to a **Medium** magnitude of change and a **Moderate** (adverse) level of effect.
- 9.3.10 At **Year 15**, following establishment of the proposed planting, the hedgerow reinforcement, hedgerow trees and tree planting will provide a degree of additional mitigation. The built elements of the Proposed Development will benefit from enhanced screening and containment, allowing the proposals to further assimilate and integrate within the landscape. The magnitude of effect will reduce to **Small**, resulting in a **Minor** (adverse) level of effect.

Walkers using PRoW 15 & Residents at the western edge of Brown Edge (SCP 10)

- 9.3.11 The users of PRoW 15 and residents at the western edge of Brown Edge have elevated views over the wider landscape to the west. The Site is visible on lower lying land in the centre of the view. The view looks over falling agricultural land within the immediate foreground, towards the western valley slope and the wider settlement of Stoke on Trent beyond. The intervening mature vegetation provides a limited degree of screening to the lower-lying, eastern part of the Site; however, the distance and elevated nature of the view means that receptors have a greater appreciation of the wider landscape, settlement edge, and high voltage overhead powerlines, as illustrated by **SCP 10**. These detracting features result in a number of vertical elements located on the skyline forming focal points.
- 9.3.12 Where visible the built elements of the Proposed Development will be partially visible above, the intervening woodland. They will also be seen in the context of the overhead powerlines

and associated large pylons alongside the settlement edge, which is more evident from the higher ground. In addition to this the restricted height and unsubstantial massing of the Proposed Development limits the potential for effects to be perceived. The proposed landscape enhancements to the Site will result in views of the built elements gradually becoming more filtered, albeit at the outset this will be minimal. At **Year 1**, on balance and given the distance from the Site, the proposals will result in a limited change to the view, equating to a **Small** magnitude of change and a **Minor** (adverse) level of effect.

- 9.3.13 At **Year 15**, following establishment of the proposed planting, including substantial hedgerow reinforcement, new hedgerow trees and areas of scrub, the built elements of the Proposed Development will benefit from enhanced screening and containment, allowing the proposals to further assimilate and integrate within the landscape. On this basis, the magnitude of effect will reduce to **Very Small**, with a **Negligible** (adverse) level of effect.

Residents within Brown Edge (SCP 11, Photomontage 2)

- 9.3.14 Residents within Brown Edge will experience limited intervisibility as the settlement is located on undulating landform. **SCP 11** is located on Rocks Road, a notably elevated location within the settlement. Photomontage 2 is taken from along Church Road, looking along the existing settlement edge towards the Site. The view from this elevated position looks over the residential development within the western part of the settlement, beyond which the western valley side is evident. The wider sprawling urban extent of Stoke-on-Trent is visible in the distance. The western part of the Site is glimpsed above and the intervening development, with the Site forming a very minor component within a panoramic view. These detracting components within the view result in a number of vertical elements located on the skyline forming focal points.
- 9.3.15 Where visible the built elements of the Proposed Development will be glimpsed above the intervening development and seen in the context of the overhead powerlines and associated large pylons alongside the settlement edge, which is more evident from the higher ground. In addition to this the restricted height and unsubstantial massing of the Proposed Development limits the potential for effects to be perceived. The proposed landscape enhancements to the Site will result in views of the built elements gradually becoming more filtered, albeit at the outset this will be minimal. It is considered at **Year 1** the proposals will result in a limited change to the view, equating to a **Very Small** magnitude of effect and a **Negligible** (adverse) level of effect.
- 9.3.16 At **Year 15**, following establishment of the proposed planting, including substantial hedgerow reinforcement, hedgerow trees and woodland creation, the built elements of the Proposed Development will benefit from enhanced screening and containment, allowing the proposals to further assimilate and integrate within the landscape. On this basis, the magnitude of effect will remain, with a **Negligible** (adverse) level of effect.

Walkers using PRow 32 (SCP 12)

- 9.3.17 As demonstrated by **SCP 12**, the majority of the Site is heavily screened by the intervening mature vegetation structure during the winter months, with the Site becoming more heavily screened in the summertime.
- 9.3.18 On this basis, the Proposed Development is expected to give rise to a very limited change, that given the scale, nature and distance from the receptor would equate to no discernible change in the view and a magnitude of effect of **Very Small**, resulting in a **Negligible** (adverse) level of effect at **Year 1** and **Year 15**.

Walkers using Marshes Hill Common (SCP 13, Photomontage 1)

- 9.3.19 Views from this viewpoint, at highest point of Marshes Hill Common, allows for 360 degrees far reaching views over the wider landscape. The middle distance is characterised by the valley landform within which the Site is located. There are partial long-distance views of the Site, where it is seen as part of the lower western valley slopes. The view is characterised by the agricultural fields which define the lower part of the valley, within which there is limited development, with notable development covering the upper slopes and ridgeline. Brown Edge extends down the eastern valley side, from the higher landform within the left of the view, to the mid-slope within the centre of the view. Beyond the Site, further development spills over the ridgeline and heads down the western valley side. This development, alongside the overhead powerlines and associated pylons that cross the landscape contrast with the more rural agricultural landscape.
- 9.3.20 The Proposed Development within the Site would be glimpsed and partially visible, seen in the context of the overhead powerlines and associated large pylons alongside the settlement edge. In addition to this, the restricted height and unsubstantial massing of the Proposed Development limits the potential for the development to form a notable or alien feature within the landscape and therefore limits any potential adverse effects. The proposed landscape enhancements to the Site would result in views of the proposals gradually becoming more filtered, albeit at the outset this would be minimal. At **Year 1**, the proposals will result in a limited change to the view, equating to a **Very Small** magnitude of effect and a **Negligible** (adverse) level of effect.
- 9.3.21 At Year 15, following establishment of the proposed planting, including substantial hedgerow reinforcement, new hedgerow trees and woodland creation, the built elements of the Proposed Development will benefit from enhanced screening and containment, allowing the proposals to further assimilate and integrate within the landscape. On this basis, the magnitude of effect will remain **Very Small**, with a **Negligible** (adverse) level of effect.

Users of Willfield Lane (SCP 14)

- 9.3.22 As demonstrated by **SCP 14**, where views are possible from Willfield Lane across the valley, the majority of the Site is heavily screened by the intervening mature vegetation structure during the winter months, with the Site becoming more heavily screened in the summertime.
- 9.3.23 On this basis, the Proposed Development is expected to give rise to a very limited change, that given the scale, nature and distance from the receptor will equate to no discernible change in the view and a magnitude of effect of **None**, resulting in a **Neutral** level of effect at **Year 1** and **Year 15**.

Walkers using PRoW 6 & Residents north of Endon Road (SCP 15 & SCP 16)

- 9.3.24 **SCP 15** demonstrates views from the section of PRoW 6 as it emerges from the residential development edge, with **SCP 16** demonstrating views from the residential edge as it extends up the valley side looking north west along the valley from northern edge of existing development along Endon Road. The majority of the Site is heavily screened by the intervening mature vegetation structure during the winter months, with the Site becoming more heavily screened in the summertime.
- 9.3.25 On this basis, the Proposed Development is expected to give rise to a very limited change, at most, which given the scale, nature and distance from the receptor will equate to no discernible change in the view and a magnitude of effect of **None**, resulting in a **Neutral** level of effect at **Year 1** and **Year 15**.

Users of Greenway Hall Road (SCP 17)

- 9.3.26 As demonstrated by **SCP 17**, views are possible from Greenway Hill Road as it passes along a localised ridge. The view looks north west along the valley, which contains notable existing development within the foreground and middle distance. The majority of the Site is heavily screened by the intervening mature vegetation structure during the winter months, with the Site becoming more heavily screened in the summertime.
- 9.3.27 On this basis, the Proposed Development is expected to give rise to a very limited change, that given the scale, nature and distance from the receptor will equate to no discernible change in the view and a magnitude of effect of **None**, resulting in a **Neutral** level of effect at **Year 1** and **Year 15**.
- 9.3.28 A summary of the predicted landscape and visual effects can be found at **Table 6** below:

Table 6: Summary of Landscape & Visual Effects

Landscape Receptors	Sensitivity	Level of Effect (Year 1)	Level of Effect (Year 15)
Pasture Field	Medium - High <i>Val: Medium Sus: High</i>	Moderate (adverse) <i>Mag: Medium</i>	Moderate (adverse) <i>Mag: Medium</i>
Landform	Medium <i>Val: Medium Sus: Medium</i>	Moderate (adverse) <i>Mag: Medium</i>	Moderate (adverse) <i>Mag: Medium</i>
Native Hedgerows	Low <i>Val: Low Sus: Low</i>	Negligible (beneficial) <i>Mag: Very Small</i>	Minor (beneficial) <i>Mag: Medium</i>
Hedgerow Trees	Medium - Low <i>Val: Medium Sus: Low</i>	Negligible (beneficial) <i>Mag: Very Small</i>	Minor (beneficial) <i>Mag: Medium</i>
Character of the Site and its Immediate Vicinity	Medium <i>Val: Medium Sus: Medium</i>	Moderate (adverse) <i>Mag: Medium</i>	Minor (adverse) <i>Mag: Small</i>
Visual Receptors	Sensitivity	Level of Effect (Year 1)	Level of Effect (Year 15)
Walkers using PRoW 13: Brown Edge Green Vale Walk (SCP 4 – 7)	Medium - High <i>Val: Medium Sus: High</i>	Moderate (adverse) <i>Mag: Medium</i>	Minor (adverse) <i>Mag: Small</i>
Walkers using PRoW 6: Brown Edge Green Vale Walk (SCP 8)	Medium - High <i>Val: Medium Sus: High</i>	Moderate (adverse) <i>Mag: Medium</i>	Minor (adverse) <i>Mag: Small</i>
Walkers using PRoW 8 (SCP 9)	Medium <i>Val: Low Sus: High</i>	Moderate (adverse) <i>Mag: Medium</i>	Minor (adverse) <i>Mag: Small</i>
Walkers using PRoW 15 & Residents at the western edge of Brown Edge (SCP 10)	Medium <i>Val: Low Sus: High</i>	Minor (adverse) <i>Mag: Small</i>	Negligible (adverse) <i>Mag: Very Small</i>
Residents within Brown Edge (SCP 11)	Medium <i>Val: Low Sus: High</i>	Negligible (adverse) <i>Mag: Very Small</i>	Negligible (adverse) <i>Mag: Very Small</i>
Walkers using PRoW 32 (SCP 12)	Medium <i>Val: Low Sus: High</i>	Negligible (adverse) <i>Mag: Very Small</i>	Negligible (adverse) <i>Mag: Very Small</i>
Walkers using Marshes Hill Common (SCP 13)	Medium - High <i>Val: Medium Sus: High</i>	Negligible (adverse) <i>Mag: Very Small</i>	Negligible (adverse) <i>Mag: Very Small</i>
Users of Willfield Lane (SCP 14)	Medium - Low <i>Val: Low Sus: Medium</i>	Neutral (n/a) <i>Mag: None</i>	Neutral (n/a) <i>Mag: None</i>
Walkers using PRoW 6 & Residents north of Endon Road (SCP 15 & SCP 16)	Medium <i>Val: Low Sus: High</i>	Neutral (n/a) <i>Mag: None</i>	Neutral (n/a) <i>Mag: None</i>
Users of Greenway Hall Road (SCP 17)	Medium - Low <i>Val: Low Sus: Medium</i>	Neutral (n/a) <i>Mag: None</i>	Neutral (n/a) <i>Mag: None</i>

10 Summary

- 10.1.1 In preparing for this Hearing, the Appellant has considered the potential for minor changes to the Proposed Development and battery types to include the latest battery technology and specifications and proposes to submit revised plans in due course. These changes are outlined at **Section 7** of this report.
- 10.1.2 An assessment of the likely landscape and visual effects arising from the amended proposals has been undertaken in accordance with the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition.
- 10.1.3 In broad terms, the Site is located approximately 170m north east of Ball Green, a suburb of Chell near Burslem, Stoke-on-Trent. To the east lies Brown Edge, a village and civil parish in the Staffordshire Moorlands, approximately 1.03km from the Site boundary. The Site, its immediate setting, local and wider area to the north and east are within Staffordshire Moorlands unitary authority area, with the area to the immediate west and local and wider area to south within Stoke-on-Trent unitary authority area, both are part of Staffordshire. At a more local level, the Site is within a shallow valley landscape that is influenced by its proximity to the existing settlement edge and overhead high voltage pylons.
- 10.1.4 The Site comprises pastoral land, which at the time of the Site visit was rough grassland, with the field boundaries defined by a combination of post and wire fencing and fragmented native hedgerow with mature hedgerow trees.
- 10.1.5 There is no public access to the Site, with a limited network of PRoW within the immediate setting and local area. As the landform rises to the east, the network of routes becomes more extensive around Brown Edge. The Site and local area are washed over by the Stoke Green Belt, and there are a number of listed buildings within Brown Edge, approximately 1.26km to the north-east of the Site.
- 10.1.6 Pastoral land is a common feature in the immediate, local and wider landscape. The Site is grazed regularly and devoid of any notable internal vegetation. The Site is enclosed by existing vegetation with the lower-lying eastern part of the Site being more heavily screened by existing vegetation reducing the contribution the Site makes to the prevailing landscape character.
- 10.1.7 A thorough review and analysis of national and local level planning policy and published landscape character assessments has been carried out to inform the baseline assessment.
- 10.1.8 An assessment of the likely landscape and visual effects of the Proposed Development has been undertaken at **Year 1** and **Year 15** of operation.

10.1.9 The Site is small-scale with a degree of enclosure currently provided as a result of the local landform alongside the mature vegetation structure within the immediate setting and local area. This limits the Site's visual envelope. The character of the Site and the surrounding area is predominantly agricultural, with notable urban influences from detracting features within the immediate and local area including existing dispersed settlement and overhead high voltage powerlines with associated large pylons.

10.1.10 Upon maturation of the proposed landscape strategy, it will provide enhanced enclosure and filter views of taller elements within the Proposed Development. It is considered that the proposals comply with guidance set out in the published landscape character assessments:

- *"The planting of small woodlands, hedgerows with associated trees and tree groups can help to restore the vegetational cover and re-articulate the scale of the landscape following its gradual erosion due to lack of maintenance of the hedgerow pattern";*
- *"Planting, both trees and woodlands can be used effectively to reinforce the existing vegetational structure to enable it to more readily absorb new development and to screen the edges of existing settlement and industrial/commercial uses"; and*
- *"Woodland planting of a small to medium scale is generally appropriate in this landscape, from field corner to field size, tying into the existing woodlands and hedgerows with attention to edge detail and predominantly of a broadleaved character".*

10.1.11 When considered in the round, the Proposed Development will result in a **Moderate** (adverse) level of effect on the Character of the Site and its Immediate Vicinity. This effect will reduce over time and a **Minor** (adverse) effect is predicted at Year 15 following maturation of the landscape proposals. The adverse effects resulting to the Pasture Field and Landform will remain until decommissioning of the BESS.

10.1.12 Walkers on the Brown Edge Green Vale Walk will experience **Moderate** (adverse) effects at **Year 1**; however, these effects are predicted to diminish following maturation of the landscape proposals. At **Year 15**, effects on visual amenity are judged to reduce to **Minor** (adverse) for receptors in the vicinity of the Site, and **Negligible** (adverse) or **Neutral** for those receptors with middle to long-range views.

10.1.13 In relation to the Green Belt assessment included within this report, the Site is located on lower lying landform, and away from the existing settlement edge which lies along the localised ridgeline to the south-west. This diminishes the contribution the Site makes to the local landscape character, and materially limits the Site's contribution to checking sprawl or preventing coalescence. There is currently no development within the Site and as such it does contribute to safeguarding the countryside. This results in the Site providing a **Moderate / Limited** contribution to this purpose. The Site is not located within or near a historic town and therefore does not contribute to this purpose.

- 10.1.14 In addition to the purposes of the Green Belt, an essential characteristic of the Green Belt as set out in the Framework, is its openness. Openness can be considered by definition (absence of built development in principle); spatially/volumetrically (how much openness is taken up by built development); or in terms of a visual aspect (how the openness or its loss is perceived visually). Openness can also be considered in terms of the duration of the development, its remediability, and the degree of activity likely to be generated.
- 10.1.15 Inevitably, there will be a change to the openness arising from the Proposed Development, as the existing field is currently free from development and will subsequently contain a level of built form. The proposals will also result in a change to the visual openness of the Site. The access track would result in a change to the higher ground within the Site, with the majority of the proposed built form located on lower lying landform that is currently provided a level of enclosure by the existing mature vegetation that serves to screen and filter views into this part of the Site, in particular from the Brown Edge Green Vale Walk on the eastern side of the valley. The Proposed Development is considered temporary and reversible after a period of 40 years. There will be very little traffic generated by the proposals. Overall, it is considered the level of overall harm to the openness of the Green Belt will be **Limited**.
- 10.1.16 On this basis, the Site is considered to have the capacity to accommodate the Proposed Development without long-term unacceptable effects on landscape character and visual amenity, whilst the proposed landscape enhancements are deemed to have the potential for some long-term beneficial effects through the establishing proposed tussock grassland, native hedgerow, hedgerow trees and scrub to restoring degraded and characteristic features.